Relation of Thomson's Seasons to Vergil's Georgics

by Margaret C. Delo

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seasons to Vergil's Georgics

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Maggie Delo.

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Outline.

The Relation of Thomson's Seasons to Virgil's Georgics.

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iginality.

With the examples of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Tennyson before us, as, perhaps, the finest borrowers in the whole range of English poetry it is impossible to say that a poet to be original shall not borrow. Who but the poets themselves may fix the bounds of their genius and determine what is legitimate in the material, which, shaped by the creative hand, and quickened into new life by the inspiration of the poet soul, becomes immortal? Bascom, in his Philosophy of Literature, has well shown that he only is truly original who has given superiority of form to the substance used, whether it is his own or another's, and who has endowed the new product with the qualities of a free and exalted genius. If the masters of English poetry borrowed, not only plots, incidents, and characters, but often ideas, and even the very words in which they were conveyed, without incurring blame, they have undoubtedly furnished ample excuse for imitators of subsequent time.

hiversality of
imitation

But it is not in the English

language alone that poets have been indebted to their predecessors. The channels leading back to the "original fountain" are so many and so devious that it would be presumptious, indeed, for any one to say conclusively just where it is to be found. Occasionally there springs forth from the soil an unconscious genius like that of Burns, whose poems seem to gush spontaneously from the heart with scarcely a trace of foreign influence, but such instances are rare to find, and the vast throng of poets, Anglo-Saxon and Romantic, Latin and Greek, alike, betray the influence of others works upon themselves.

susceptibility of the poetic mind to classical learning.

The poetic mind is peculiarly susceptible to the effects of classical learning, all that is beautiful, graceful and noble in literature finding therein a ready soil which cannot but reproduce in some form the seed thoughts committed to it. This reproduction appears sometimes as a faint and delicate likeness scarcely discernible to the most sympathetic mind, a likeness that results from the fullest assimilation of another's spirit, and which is expressed

unconsciously by the poet. It is a reproduction of the atmosphere: the sunshine, cloud, or gloom that dominates a work and gives it its peculiar character. This kind of resemblance cannot properly be called imitation.

likeness may due to imitation or incidence.

That is a less subtile likeness which reproduces the imagery and feeling of another so distinctly that the analogy is readily apparent though expressed with such delicacy and originality that it might easily be a coincidence. Mr. E. C. Stedman in his essay on "Tennyson and Theocritus" gives several examples of imitations that seem to me to be of this type. One from the "Epitaph of Bion," supposed to have been written by Moschus, will serve for illustration:—

"Thee Cypris holds more dear than that last [kiss
She gave Adonis as he lay dying."

The imagery and feeling have been most delicately repeated by Tennyson in "Tears Idle Tears":—

"Dear as remembered kisses after death."

Notwithstanding the figure is uncommon the likeness would seem to be accidental if it were not possible to find so many other traces of the influence of Moschus upon Tennyson.

ntentional
nitation

The correspondence of metre, structure, theme, or language would genually indicate intentional imitation. The metre of "Locksley Hall," with somewhat of the thought, immediately suggests that exquisite anonymous poem "Pervigilium Veneris" and convinces the reader that Tennyson was acquainted with it. The minute correspondence in metre, structure, thought, and atmosphere of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" with portions of the "Faery Queen" leaves no room for doubt as to his model. But the obligation to Spenser is abundantly paid by Thomson's own genius, which pervades his poem and gives it the quality of originality. Chaucer and Shakespeare furnish many examples of wholesale appropications of material yet no one would think of calling them imitators. Unskillful men, however, who have borrowed less have been justly charged with plagiarism. Between these extremes, the unconscious expression of the completely assimilated thought and feeling of another, on the one hand, and gross plagiarism on the other are to be found innumerable examples of indebtedness.

Mr. Stedman's essay on "Tenny-

"Stedman on imitation

son and Theocritus" contains a statement of the ways in which the work of one poet may resemble that of another which so much aids my present purpose that I take the liberty of quoting it entire: "There are," he says, "two modes in which the workmanship of one poet may resemble that of another. The first, while not subjecting an author to the charge of direct appropriation in the vulgar sense of plagiarism is detected by critical analogy, and, of the two, is more easily recognized by the skilled reader. It is the mode which involves either a sympathetic treatment of rythmical breaks, pauses, accents, alliterations; a correspondence of the architecture of the two poems, with parallel interludes and effects; correspondence of theme allowing for difference of place and period; or, a correspondence of scenic and metrical purpose; in fine a general analogy of atmosphere and tone. The second, more obvious and commonplace, method is that displaying immediate coincidence of structure, language, and thought; a mode which in the hands of inferior men, leaves the users at the mercy of their dullest reviewers

th classes the "Seasons"

Of the first class of resemblances indicated by Mr. Stedman, some, at least, may be shown to subsist between Thomson's "Seasons" and Virgil's "Georgics," though more belong, undoubtedly, to the second division.

gil's indebtedness to Greeks

But Thomson had an illustrious example before him for Virgil himself did not blush to use the Greek and Roman authors with the utmost freedom. He rather boasted of the fact, as when in Georgics, II. 176, he announces his intention of singing like Hesiod:—

"Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen"[1]

And in the Eclogues he plainly acknowledges his indebtedness to Theocritus.

(Ec., IV. 1).[2]

"Sicelides Musae, paulo majora canamus."

Also, (Ec., VI. 1, 2).[3]

"Prima Syracosio dignata est ludere versu nostra neque erubuit silvas habitare Thalia".

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[1] And I shall sing the song of Ascra Through the towns of Rome.

[2] Muses of Sicily, now shall I sing in more majestic strains.

[3] My first muse deigned to sport in Syracusan verse, nor did she blush to sing a pastoral song.

Virgil not only states his intention of singing pastoral rose like his Sicilian model but he makes use of the structure, the characters, names, scenery, thought, and situations, and even the exact words of the Idyls of Theocritus, interweaving here and there a thread of Roman life, or Grecian myth and landscape, and commingling all in a manner that results in utter incongruity, and gives the "Eclogues" a wholly artificial character that is neither Roman nor Sicilian. That Virgil was a student of books for more than of men and things is at once apparent to the least critical reader of his three great works, all of which are adorned with an abundance of classical embroidery by a method which has been imitated by most of the poets from that time to the present. That the classical learning in which he delighted should manifest itself in his poems was inevitable, both because of the spirit of the Augustan age, which accepted the most servile imitations with unreserved applause, and because of his shy, retiring nature which impelled him to look to his loved books for inspiration rather than to seek it among men. Mr. Conington in his

scholarly introduction to the "Georgics" tells us that "In possessing Theocritus, Hesiod, and Homer, we may feel that we possess, as it were, the exciting causes of the Eclogues, the Georgics, and the Aeneid. They do not, indeed, represent all the literary influences which must have told on Virgil's genius, or disclose to us the origin of the peculiar manner in which he has conducted the work of imitation, but they show us what it was that in each successive case first stimulated his general conception of his subject — what it was that he admired in the literature of Greece and sought to reproduce among his own countrymen. They enable us to judge of him not only as a poet but as a critic of the poetry of others." Besides these three chief sources Mr. Conington shows that Virgil was largely indebted to Aristotle, Theophrastus, Aratus, Cato, Varro, and Lucretius, and to others to a less degree. Notwithstanding it is quite patent that Virgil borrowed freely from a great variety of sources, his poems have the qualities of truth and sincerity and are so dominated by his own peculiar artistic genius that they have all the charm of originality.

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But at present Virgil's imitations and his originality interest us only so far as they are concerned with Thomson's relation to him. Living in the artificial atmosphere of the eighteenth century with its abounding literary activity, Thomson found himself in the midst of influences that tended to crush all individuality and freedom. The critical spirit had culminated in Pope, who was Thomson's warm friend, adviser, and critic. The domination of style was absolute. Sense was sacrificed to form, and thought and feeling were far to seek in the striking antitheses and daintily turned phrases that passed for poetic excellence. Nor was Thomson able wholly to resist the false spirit of his time. He evidently seeks for effective phrases and epithets, and delights in pompous language. In deference to the prevailing method he indulges freely in periphrase, allegory, personification, apostrophe, and alliteration. The love of detail that characterized the age is everywhere manifest, and, like all the writers of his time, he makes a display of classical learning.

homson's ucation.

Judging from all available accounts he had the usual elementary

training in the ancient classics,[1] and several years' study at Edinburgh University, spending his time there from 1715–1725 in classical and philosophical studies and in preparing for the ministry. But if we had not the testimony of his biographers there is abundant internal evidence in his poems of his classical learning, which, readily assimilated by his sensitive mind, and ~~modified~~ modified by his exalted imagination could not but impress itself on his works. Being a lover of the country, and a close and sympathetic observer of rural scenes and life, it was very natural that his mind should respond readily to the theme of Virgil's "Georgics", and that he should yield homage to the ancient poet of rural life by more or less conscious imitation.

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...eorgics.

Most of his biographers and critics have been strangely silent about his indebtedness to the "Georgics". Jamieson gives the subject a line: "Thomson's visible imitations of Virgil, his episodes inserted like a reneering, his invocations to Spring, to the muse, to Philosophy,

[1] D'Olivet, Sir Nicolas Harris, Leon Morel, Samuel Johnson, Lessing.

all the relics of the conventionalisms of the college, produce an incongruity." Shairp, in his "Poetic Interpretation of Nature" says he has a "composite style of language formed partly from the recollections of Millon, partly from Virgil's Georgics." And Minto, in the "Literature of the Georgian Era", tells us that "There are more frequent traces in his other 'Seasons' (than "Winter") of deliberate imitation of Virgil's 'Georgics', and deliberate search for good descriptive topics."

Internal evidence

A careful study, however, of the subject matter, character, and structure of the two poems, with a minute comparison, line by line, of the thoughts and words reveals a large number of resemblances both in general atmosphere and in detail. The likenesses in general structure and method are too many to be accidental; and those in detail are so close, at least in some points, as to give the impression that Thomson must either have had a very retentive memory for pictures and words, or else he had a copy of the "Georgics" before him when he wrote the "Seasons".

Internal evidence

The "Memoir" of Thomson by Sir Nicolas Harris contains two letters of Thomson

that mention Virgil with reverence. In one to Bubb Dodington, after expressing his desire to travel in order that he might store his imagination with ideas of "all-beautiful, all-great, and all-perfect" nature, he says: "These are the true materia poetica, the light and colors, with which fancy kindles up the whole creation, paints a sentiment and even embodies an abstracted thought. I long to see the fields where Virgil gathered his immortal honey." His acquaintance with the "Georgics" is indicated in a letter to his absent friend Patterson to whom he writes: "May your health, which never failed you yet, still continue, till you have scraped together enough to return home and live in some sunny corner, as happy as the Corycius Senex in Virgil's Fourth Georgic, whom I recommend both to you and myself as a perfect model of the truest happy life".

He formally acknowledges the likeness of his theme to Virgil's "Georgics" and admits Grecian influence upon Roman letters in Spring, 55—57:—

knowledges likeness of eme.

"Such themes as these the rural Maro sung
To wide imperial Rome, in the full height
Of elegance and taste by Greece refined."

Among the pleasures of Spring he

describes the charm of reading the "Georgics" while reclining beneath a spreading ash on a warm afternoon:—

(Spring, 455–457).

"There let the classic page thy fancy lead
Through rural scenes; such as the Mantuan swain
Paints in the matchless harmony of song."

In the winter by the ruddy fireside he would sit studious,

"And hold high converse with the mighty dead".

Among the great figures that throng his vision comes Virgil:—

(Winter, 530–538).

"Behold, who yonder comes! in sober state,
Hail mild and strong, as is a vernal sun:
'Tis Phoebus' self, or else the Mantuan swain."

With these numerous evidences of Thomson's acquaintance with the "Georgics" and his reverence for Virgil, together with the general resemblances to be observed in the "Seasons," and the large number of passages that are palpable imitations, we are led to conclude that Thomson made use of the "Georgics" rather than of the Greek and Roman writers who provided Virgil with material. The fact that Thomson imitates so large a variety of passages that are immediately traceable to so many different sources strongly enforces this view. That Thomson should have borrow-

d Virgil
ther than
gil's sources

ed directly from Hesiod, Aratus, Lucretius, and others of Virgil's sources would imply a wider scholarship than we have any reason to think he possessed, especially when all was so easily obtained at second hand from an avowedly loved author. And we know also that in Thomson's other works he did not scruple to make wholesale appropriations of all kinds of poetic paraphernalia.

While the "Seasons" and the "Georgics" are both poems on Nature, manifesting a general correspondence in theme and arrangement, they differ essentially in some features. The "Georgics" treats of the earth as subdued and made productive by the toil of man. The "Seasons" describe the earth as the beautiful abode of man. The one, to a greater degree, glorifies labor and treats incidentally of the beauties of nature; the main purpose of the other is to portray the varied aspects of nature through the changing seasons, and incidentally to deal with its relation to life, and especially the effect of the contemplation of Nature upon the mind of man. In both the human element is strong. Both exalt labor. And both express the beauty and simplicity of

essential characteristics of the works.

country life.

It cannot be claimed that the origin of the "Seasons" is to be found in the "Georgics". Each poem is a distinct conception prompted by the author's love of nature and his rural experience. In Vergil's Mantuan farm with its flocks and grainfields, and in Thomson's English rose garden with its nightingales may be found some of the primary sources of inspiration. Each chooses a theme in harmony with his place and time, and modifies it according to his own character and experience. But when the main idea of the "Seasons" is once clearly conceived in the poet's mind it is shaped and aided, or, sometimes, marred, by the introduction of many of the peculiar characteristics of the "Georgics", and of the very incidents and language.

origin of the "Seasons" not found in the "Georgics."

There is a general analogy that is less readily observed than the immediate likenesses of thought and language, but which furnishes just as sure evidence of the influence of the "Georgics" upon the "Seasons". In noting this general likeness it is necessary to take into account the elements of time and place and the character and experience of the two poets. In making a comparison of the two

General analogy.

Thomson is more truly a descrip-
msonymas- tive poet than Virgil. The "Seasons" is
e of the essentially a descriptive poem, while the
criptions. prime motive of the Georgics is instruction,
the descriptive elements being a poetic
necessity. But it is this quality in the
"Georgics" that appeals most strongly to
Thomson's imagination, and he copies
the pictures but does not attempt to adapt
the precepts of Roman husbandry to
eighteenth century English life.

There is, however, a didactic quality
dactic qual- in the "Seasons," which chiefly takes the
ity in both. form of moral instruction. It deals with
a great variety of topics, a few of which
seem to be analogous. Both effort to
religious observance, and to kindness to
animals, to patriotism, and to the
innocence of country life.

By way of introducing his de-
hilosophy scription of the beauties of rural life
Virgil invokes the muses to aid him in
the study of philosophy, or, if the cold
blood around his heart forbids he will
be content to live inglorious beside
rural streams;[1] Thomson concludes his
dissertation on the advantages of the
country with an invocation to Nature to

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1 G., II. 475–486, Ele.

enrich him with the knowledge of all her works, but if the sluggish streams about his heart forbid that blest ambition he would lie inglorious by the lowly brook and dream of philosophy.[1] Beside this palpable imitation which occurs at the end of "Autumn" each of the "Seasons" contains towards its close a discussion of philosophy in a similar tone. As this was a favorite subject with Thomson he might have introduced it into his work independently of Virgil, but he would not, except by conscious imitation, have given it a similar place and connected it directly with the description of rural life, which also reproduces the thought and language of Virgil at many points in almost the same order. Throughout the entire work there is discerned a philosophic tone which appears to a less degree in the Georgics, but which may be felt here and there in connection with similar topics.

religious element

Scarcely less apparent is the religious element, which is introduced into the "Seasons" in the same manner as it appears in the "Georgics." Virgil in full sincerity calls upon the Roman divinities[2]

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1 Summer, 1352 - 1378. 2 G., I. 1-20. Etc.

for aid, Liber and Ceres, Pan and Pales, and the nymphs and dryads; while Thomson, in a christian spirit, and with devout heart prays to his Maker, and the Father of Light and Life[1] and asks blessings upon his work. Each feels man's dependence upon a power higher than his own, and urges the expression of thankfulness. The idea of all pervading deity is brought out distinctly in both; by Virgil in connection with the divine intelligence of bees,[2] and by Thomson with the springtime instincts of the living world.[3] His religion is not deism as some of his critics claim, but the influence of his model betrayed him into some expressions of a deistic nature. Pope's influence may possibly be felt here.

invocations

A strong general analogy appears in the invocations and addresses of the two poems. I have already mentioned the invocations to their own peculiar divinities, which are made by both poets in each of the four divisions of their works. As Virgil directs Roman farmers[4] to plough and to cultivate the vine so Thomson urges the Britains[5] to renovate the plough and to

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1. Winter, 217. Eli. 2. G., IV 219-227. 3. Spring, 849-866, Eli.
4. G., I. 210, & II. 86. 5. Spring, 67.

clothe the autumn fields with fruit. Woodland deities,[1] Fauns, and Dryad maidens[2] are summoned to dance in joy with the Roman poet, while the English bard, enraptured with the springtime calls upon loves and maidens to go with him and "tread the morning dews."[3] Virgil sings, "Salve magna parens frugum Saturnia tellus!"[4] then Thomson, "Happy Britania! .... Rich is thy soil, and merciful thy clime."[5] And both celebrate the glories of their native land. Both address the sun as the author of the year, and invoke his aid.[6, 7] Virgil calls upon Apollo[8], and Thomson upon Inspiration[9] The two great Roman patrons of literature Augustus and Maecenas,[10] are appealed to with a tribute of praise, and Thomson dedicates his poems to his patrons, the Countess of Hertford,[11] Bubb Dodington,[12] Onslow,[13] and Wilmington[14] In the address to Augustus there is much that is unduly complimentary, but it is given, perhaps, in a semireligious spirit and is, therefore, excusable. The invocations to Maecenas have a natural manly tone. But Thomson

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[1] G. I. 10. [2] G., I. 10, 11. [3] Spring, 467–491.
[4] G., II. 173. [5] Summer, 1442–5. [6] G., I. 6, and
[7] Spring, 51, 52. [8] G., III. 1, 2. [9] Summer, 15. [10] G., I 25, II. 41, III. 41, + IV. 1–5. [11] Spring, 5. [12] Summer, 21. [13] Autumn, 9. [14] Winter, 18.

takes the one to Augustus as his model and loads his dedications with fulsome flattery. Just as Virgil calls upon Augustus for aid[1] in a degenerate age Thomson appeals to the patriots, the Duke of Argyle and Duncan Forbes[2], to come to the assistance of his native Scotland. In addition to these forms of invocation, which are, in fact, nearly all that Virgil employs, Thomson apostrophizes other friends, the Seasons, nature and philosophy. He was generally, he exaggerates his model.

This exaggeration is especially noticeable in the digressions, which are more frequent in the "Seasons" and usually extended to an undue length. Some of them are occupied with topics that resemble those of Virgil though many have no parallels in the "Georgics". As a rule they are rapid and thoroughly artificial. This is especially true of the episodes, inserted, as Laine says, "like a veneering" with as little excuse for their presence as Virgil's stories of Aristaeus and Orpheus. And they are told with far less skill. Celadon and Amelia are designed to awaken sympathy,

digressions

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[1] G., I 498–513. [2] Autumn, 910–949.

as are Orpheus and Eurydice, but the monstrosity of a virtuous maiden struck by lightning by her lover's side shocks the feelings, and fails to arouse the pathetic interest that is felt in the fate of Eurydice. The tale of Damon and Musidora is utterly ridiculous; and Lavinia and Palaemon are no more English than the characters in Virgil's stories are Roman. They are Ruth and Boaz introduced into an eighteenth century grain field and adorned with Latin names. But the influence of Thomson's model is felt, not in the likeness of his episodes to those of Virgil, but in the fact that he regarded it necessary to include them as a part of the architecture which he has copied in so many details. Other digressions in which the influence of the "Georgics" is more strongly felt are found in the praises of Britain,[1] the description of the plague,[2] the account of the Golden Age, and the rise of Industry,[3] and in the very close imitations of Virgil's treatment of the subject of universal love[4] and of the charms of rural life[5] and the study

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[1] G., II. 136-176 + Summer, 1440-1601. [2] G., III. 478-566 + Summer, 1026-1100.
[3] G., I. 121-159 + Spring, 242-250 + Aut. 72-140. [4] G., III 209-283 + Sp. 614-1176.
[5] G. II 458-542, + Autumn, 1235-1873.

of nature). All of Virgils more important digressions have been utilized in some form except the neat description of the old man of Coryeus, whom Thomson elsewhere regards as "a model of the truest happy life".

usies of tive land.

The Roman poet sings the praises of Italy and he is followed by his English admirer with a eulogy of Britain, which has some features in detail like those of the model; though the chief resemblance is in the adaptation of the idea. This instance alone would have little significance, but, occurring in conjunction with other similar adaptations of Virgil's devices it is to be considered an imitation. Italy is great according to the Roman idea of greatness, and blest above all other lands. She is a peaceful land teeming with grain, wine, and olives. Numerous are her flocks and herds. A genial climate produces abundant fruit twice in a season. Stately cities rise with their trophies of human toil. Two seas wash her shores. She has beautiful lakes and fine harbors, and sea barriers that baffle the angry waves. She has mines of silver and gold. And chief among her glories is a long line of the famous men of Rome. Britain is the land of liberty. Rich is her soil and merciful her clime.

Her pride is in her guardian oaks and valleys golden with grain, On her mountains flocks bleat numberless and bellowing herds rove round their sides. Her cities are full of trade and joyful toil, and ports crowded with masts reveal commercial prosperity. Her youth are trained in battle and on the sea. And last is a long line of her "sons of glory" from Alfred down, and a tribute to the daughters of Britain. The closing lines of the eulogy remind one of Virgil's picture of the shores of Italy:—

(Summer, 1596–1601).

"Island of bliss! amid the subject seas
That thunder round thy rocky coasts, set up,
At once the wonder, terror, and delight
Of distant nations; whose remotest shores
Can soon be shaken by thy naval arm;
Not to be shook thyself, but all assaults
Baffling like thy hoar cliffs the lond sea wave."

Although I have not given a complete outline of these descriptions yet it is readily seen that they have many topics in common arranged in very nearly the same order. And but few are introduced into either that are not common to both. The analogy of theme and parallels in detail can hardly be considered mere coincidences.

The introduction of a pestilence is very natural in describing the horrid scene, and Thomson may have been entirely free from any influence of Virgil's vivid picture of the plague among animals, though from the great length and vividness of that account it could not but make an impression on the mind of the reader, and Thomson as if making a comparison says:—

Silence

"Her awful rage
The brutes escape. Man is her destined prey."

And both give minute descriptions of the effects of the disease on their victims, and also upon inanimate nature, and assign the tainted atmosphere as the cause:—

(G., III: 478–479).

"Hic quondam morbo coeli miseranda coorta est
Tempestas, totoque autumni incanduit aestu": 1

(Summer, 1052–1053).

"What need I mention those inclement skies
Where, frequent o'er the sickening city, plague,
The fiercest child of Nemesis divine,
Descends."

Both poets regret the loss of the Golden Age and praise the rise of Industry,

Golden age.

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1 Here once from the distempers of the skies
A fatiable plague arose, and burned with
all the heat of autumn.

each varying his account in harmony with his religious character and his theme. Virgil tells of the age of Saturn when nature of her own free will produced all things needful. Man lived for the common welfare. All noxious things were absent. But Jove was unwilling that this state should continue, so he sent pernicious animals, destructive storms and baleful plagues upon the crops, and drove men to use their intellects in devising the means of subsistence; and Ceres, when acorns in the woods began to fail taught man the arts of agriculture. Thomson emphasizes the biblical idea of original man in a state of innocence. Then the earth produced spontaneously. The gracious clouds dropped fatness down. Lions and lambs played together in gentle security, and man had not learned to use animal food. But innocence was lost and the race degenerated in iron times. Vindictive nature changed her course. The deluge came to punish men for their crimes. And the seasons followed with their own peculiar dangers. Thomson does not in this connection tell how man was driven to industrial life, but the thought is taken up again in "autumn," 43-95, where he tells of primitive man feeding upon acorns and shivering

in the woods amid winter storms "Till Industry approached" and unfolded his faculties. The idea of the Golden age is a common heritage, and, like the pestilence, may have been introduced simply because of its peculiar fitness. I think, however that this digression, also, is made with the model in mind.

As there are in the subjects of universal love and rural life so many close imitations I shall defer their discussion until I take up the more detailed comparison of specific parts.

Both poets describe remote regions they have never visited. Virgil with little regard for the facts of geography or natural science, describes the Libyan shepherds[1] the Nile rising where dwell the colored Indians, and lying adjacent to Persia,[2] and Scythia while the Danube rolls his yellow sands; and Rhodope, stretching away under the Pole, with everlasting winter, and continuous snows, and crusts forming suddenly upon running streams.[3] Thomson with more knowledge of geography and science, and with that power which Matthew Arnold commends in a poet,

describe regions never visited.

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[1] G., III. 339-348. [2] G., IV. 287-294. [3] G., III. 347-383.

of writing as if he were actually beholding what he describes, lets his imagination roam over almost the entire globe. He encircles the earth in the torrid zone,[1] paints the birds in farthest Thule and the Hebrides,[2] and the wolves of the Alps and the Pyrenees;[3] traverses the whole of northern Europe, and the snows of Iceland and Greenland;[4] then, passing the pole[5] descends into the western hemisphere; thence the muse leads him to the Tartar's coast and bleak Siberia[6] where the people dwell in caves; thence to Russia[7] whose great ruler commands the poet's admiration.

Indication of time by constellations

Although the indication of time by constellations was a conventional mode in Thomson's day, and he may have used it without thought of his master, yet it seems probable that he was influenced by Virgil who employs this method more frequently than any other in the "Georgics".[8] And Thomson near the beginning of each of his poems indicates the season[8] in

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[1] Summer, 630-1102. [2] Autumn, 862-880. [3] Winter 389-423
[4] Winter, 294-389. [5] Winter 889-893 [6] Winter, 902-949
[7] Winter, 930-980. [8] G. I. 68, 208, 218, 221, 222, 229, and III. 232, Etc.
[8] Spring, 26. Summer, 43; Autumn, 23. Winter, 41 Etc.

this way, which shows that its use was not merely incidental but according to a clearly defined plan. And this form of expression seems to be one of the many devices that collectively give the two works a similar tone. Since many of these features are clearly imitations it is safe to conclude that all are that present a single parallel. An instance is found in this connection in the marking of the autumnal equinox:—

(G., I. 208-209).[1]

"Libra die somnique pares ubi fecerit horas,
et medium lucis atque umbris iam dividit orbem".

(Autumn, 84).

"And Libra weighs in equal scales the year".

Classic woodland furniture

Other features that bear the impress of the classical school, and probably also of Virgil are the invocations to the muses, and the classic woodland furniture of Naids, Fauns, and Doric reeds, which are as incongruous in serious English verse as the Latin names of the youths and maidens in Thomson's tales. These were undoubtedly designed to be English though

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1 When Libra has made equal the hours of day and sleep and now divides the heavens in half between daylight and darkness.

such names as Damon, Musidora and Palaemon at once suggest the burlesque idyl of the eighteenth century. All the fictitious characters in the poems bear Latin names, and one, after the fashion of the ancient pastoral, records her love on the bark of a beech tree. But the characters themselves are neither Latin nor English. The effect of these classical trappings is to give portions of the work an artificial character, and to detract from its general excellence and seriousness.

Epithets

Thomson's love of epithets has already been mentioned. It is manifested chiefly, and with great originality, in the formation of effective compounds, but, as these combinations are not due to Latin influence they will not be considered here, although many of them contain Latin radicals. I shall, however, notice the use of words in their primitive Latin sense. They occur chiefly as adjectives, sometimes as verbs, or nouns, and are often obscure in meaning if the value of the radical is not readily perceived. They occur with sufficient frequency to give the composition a distinct coloring. A few examples will suffice for illustration; as, — "elaborious swain",

(in the sense of industrious);[1] "varied heart" (changeful);[2] "varied year" (changed);[3] "prime of days" (first);[4] "vale inguous" (well-watered);[5] "instant courage" (ready);[6] "will prevenring will" (anticipating);[7] "sordid stream" (soiled, or impure);[8] "horrid heart" (savage);[9] "generous minds" (noble),[10] "generous state" (honorable),". Some have been discovered that are clearly reproductions of epithets occurring in the "Georgics"; as,— "alternate labour",[11] which seems to have been suggested by "alternis facilis labor";[12] "bibulous sands,"[13] undoubtedly a reminiscence of "bibula harena";[14] as also "formless wild"[15] and "shapeless drift"[16] of aggeribus nivcis informis";[17] "effusive south"[18] very delicately reproduces "Jupiter uvidus austris";[19] and "Thule bellows through her utmost isles,"[20] and "farthest Thule"[21] seem to be, the one, an expansion, the other a translation of "ultima Thule".[22] Doubtless many more similar examples would be discovered by a closer examination.

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[1] Spring, 48. [2] Spring, 269. [3] Winter, 1. [4] Spring, 271.
[5] Spring, 495. [6] Spring, 689. [7] Spring, 1123. [8] Summer, 386.
[9] Spring, 265. [10] Spring, 878. [11] Autumn 902 [12] Spring, 1163.
[13] G., I. 79. [14] Autumn, 813 [15] G., I 114. [16] Winter, 263
[17] Winter, 806. [18] G., III, 354. [19] Spring, 144. [20] G., I. 418.
[21] Summer, 1168. [22] Autumn, 864. [23] G., I 30.

Although these features that are
Dissimilarity common to both poems contribute to their
general analogy, and, considered in connect-
ion with the many parallels in thought
and language, furnish indisputable
evidence that Thomson was consciously
influenced by the "Georgics," there are
many characters of the two works that are
unlike.

The difference in subject has already
In motive been briefly discussed. The motive of
the "Georgics" and the "Seasons" is essentially
different, the former being a didactic
poem treating, in the main, of agriculture,
the cultivation of the vine, stock raising,
and bee culture; while the latter is
designed to give a description of the
Seasons in relation to rural man, for
Thomson but very slightly grazes upon
city life. But both poems deal primarily
with the country, and, very naturally,
have some of the characters of pastoral
poetry so that the unlikeness in motive
is not so great as the titles would
at first seem to indicate.

In metrical structure there is
In metre no resemblance. Thomson wisely did
not attempt the Virgilian hexameter
but wrote the "Seasons" in unrhymed
iambic pentameter, that is distinctively

his own. It does not have the movement of Milton's blank verse, for, though the same in mechanical structure, the regularity of it, and the free use of alliterations, onomatopoetic forms, and singularly effective and musical compounds and epithets give his verse a softness and delicacy very unlike the grand organ swell of Paradise Lost; nor has it the ?! vivacity and charm of the Virgilian verse, but moves along, for the most part, with an exceedingly musical effect that becomes monotonous because it is so steadily maintained, or, at times, the movement is heavy and laboured which does not relieve the prevailing monotony. It has not the variety that is so constantly manifested in the Virgilian hexameter, and the effect on the ear is very different.

In style Each poet has his own peculiar style. Thomson's love of detail, his rather pompous sentence structure and constant effort to produce a musical effect, give his work an entirely original character, the easy brief, graceful style of Virgil being nowhere imitated. Even in the passages that are almost translations there is exhibited the distinctive genius of the English poet. It has already been observed that Thomson generally exaggerates his

his model in the adaptation of his devices. This disposition is especially manifested in the fullness of his treatment of a borrowed idea or subject. If Virgil gives a thought a line Thomson will require two or three to express it, and a connected discourse will usually extend to several times the length of the original.

Specific imitations.

While these are the general features of likeness and unlikeness that pertain to the two compositions, there are many specific passages in the "Seasons" that resemble parts of the "Georgics", and many that are undoubtedly imitations more or less consciously effected. Some are so close in thought and mode of treatment that one is almost compelled to suspect they are translations. This occurs more often in extended description, but sometimes in single lines. In others the likeness is exceedingly subtile, and often it is difficult to decide whether or not it is the result of imitation; and in the more minute comparison of the two works I shall, doubtless, point out some analogies that are wholly accidental, but all that seem sufficiently close to be imitations will be given. It will be the purpose of the remaining part of my work to cite the analogous passages found by a somewhat

careful examination of the two poems. Doubtless others would be discovered by a still more critical comparison.

Text used in comparison.

This investigation is based on the text of Page's "Georgics" edition of 1898, and D. G. Lorey's "Seasons", published in 1897. In this edition Mr. Lorey gives the variations of manuscript readings and of the editions of 1730 and 1738, which furnish further evidences of the imitation of the "Georgics" one of the most noticeable being a fuller description of the Golden age occurring after line 272, which combines the blessings of the Golden age of the "Georgics", and those of the good times prophesied in the Fourth Eclogue, from which the following lines are almost literally translated:—

"The stately Ram
Shone through the mead in native Purple clad,
Or milder Saffron; and the dancing Lamb
The vivid Crimson to the Sun disclosed".

But these variations will not be considered here. The citations that follow will be presented in the order in which they occur in the "Seasons", beginning with "Spring".

Spring.

This poem is introduced by a charming picture of the fertilizing Spring rains that somewhat resembles the descent of Aether in spring time showers; it is suggestive, also, of the union of

Spring showers.

heaven and earth in "Perigilium Veneris":—
(G., II 324–327).[1]

"Tum pater omnipotens fecundis imbribus aether
conjugis in gremium laetae descendit et omnes
magnus alit magno commixtus corpore fetus".
(Spring, 1–4).

"Come gentle Spring,—ethereal mildness, come;
And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
While music wakes around, veiled in a shower
Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend."

The likeness is a little closer in this:—
(Spring, 180–182).

"But who can hold the shade while Heaven descends
In universal bounty, shedding herbs,
And fruits, and flowers, on Natures ample lap?"

Ploughing

The melting of the snow on the mountains, the softening of the soil in the spring and the early ploughing, graphically imaged in the "Georgics" in four lines are touched upon here and there in a more extended description:—
(G., I 43–46)[2]

"Vere novo gelidus canis cum montibus umor

---

[1] Then almighty Father Aether descends in fertile rains into the lap of joyous earth, and mingling his great frame with hers nourish all the embryos within.

[2] In early spring when icy waters trickle from hoary mountains, and the crumb-

lignitur et Zephyro putris se gleba resolvit,
depresso incipiat iam tum mihi taurus aratro
ingemere, et sulco attritus splendescere vomer".
(Spring, 15–17).

"While softer gales succeed, at whose kind touch
Dissolving snows in livid torrents lost,
The mountains lift their green heads to the sky".
(Spring, 33–36)

"Joyous the impatient husbandman perceives
Relenting nature, and his trusty steers
Drives from their stalls to where the well-used plough
Lies in the furrow loosened from the frost."
(Spring, 41–43).

"Meanwhile incumbent o'er the shining share
The master leans, removes the obstructing clay,
Winds the whole work, and sidelong lays the glebe."

The Sun

Both address the sun as the author of the year:—
(G., I 5.6). [1]

"Vos o clarissima mundi
lumina, labentem caelo quae ducitis annum."
(Spring, 51, 52).

"And temper all, thou world-revolving sun,

---

ling glebe loosens at the west wind's touch, then let the bull groan with the impressed plough, and the worn share brighten in the furrow.

[1] O brightest lights of the world who lead the gliding year in the heavens.

into the perfect year".

Man was innocent in the Golden age

In the Golden age men lived in innocence, were unused to animal food, and knew not the arts of war. Thomson emphasises each detail of the picture:- (G., II. 586-640). [1]

"Ante etiam sceptrum Dictaei regis et ante impia quam caesis gens epulata juvencis, aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat; necdum etiam audierant inflari classica necdum impositos duris crepitare incudibus enses."

(Spring, 234-240).

"But who their virtues can declare? who pierce With vision pure, into those secret stores Of health, and life, and joy? The food of man While yet he lived in innocence, and told A length of golden years, unfleshed in blood, A stranger to the savage arts of life, Death, rapine, carnage, surfeit and disease".

Bees.

In the treatment of bees there are some analogous ideas, such as their formation of a commonwealth, their industry

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[1] Yea, even before the rule of the Cretan king, and before an impious race began to regale itself on slain bullocks, Saturn, ruler of the Golden Age led this life on earth. Nor did men yet dare to blow the martial trumpet, nor hammer out the sword on the stubborn anvil.

and forethought — the fervor with which the tiny creatures ply their tasks, and the thyme-scented honey; but these are all common-places that naturally apply to bees. If Thomson imitated Virgil's description at all he wisely avoided all the unscientific details that Virgil borrowed from the ancients:—

(G., IV. 153 - 169).[1]

"Solae communes natos, consortia tecta
urbis habent, magnisque agitant sub legibus [aevum,
et patriam solae et certos novere Penates;
ventuique hiemis memores aestate laborem
experiuntur et in medium quaesita reponunt.
namque alias ritu invigilant et foedere pacto
exercentur agris; pars intra saepta domorum
narcissi lacrimam et lentum de cortice gluten
prima favis ponunt fundamina, deinde tenaces
suspendunt ceras; alias spem gentis adultos
educunt fetus; alias purissima mella

---

[1] They alone have their children in common, have their dwellings associated in cities, and protract their life under the laws, and know a native country and permanent home; and in the summertime, mindful of the coming winter, they perform their work and lay up store for common use. For some look out for food, and toil, by agreement, in the fields; some within the walls of the home

stipant, et liquido distendent nectare cellas.
sunt, quibus ad portas cecidit custodia sorti,
inque vicem speculantur aquas et nubila caeli;
aut onera accipiunt venientum, aut agmine facto
ignavum fucos pecus a praesepibus arcent.
feruet opus, redolentque thymo fragrantia mella.

(Spring, 508-516).

"Here their delicious task the fervent bees,
In swarming millions tend. Around, athwart,
Through the soft air the busy nations fly,
Cling to the bud, and, with inserted tube,
Suck its pure essence, its ethereal soul.
And oft with bolder wing, they, soaring, dare
The purple heath, or, where the wild thyme grows,
And yellow load them with the luscious spoil.

(Autumn, 1176-1179).

---

place the narcissus' tear, and clammy gum
from bark of trees as the first foundation
for the comb, and thence suspend
the waxen cells; others lead out their young,
the nation's hope; others store up the purest
honey, and distend the cells with liquid
nectar. There are some to whose lot has
fallen the guardianship of the gates, and
in turn they watch the water and the sky;
or receive the burdens of those who are re-
turning from their work; or form in battle
line and keep back from the hive the
herd of lazy drones. The work grows hot and the
fragrant honey smells of thyme.

"The happy people, in their waxen cells,
Attending public cares, and planning schemes
Of temperance, for winter poor; rejoiced
To mark, full flowing round, their copious stores."

Nightingale

Virgil in five vivid lines, has given a touching picture of the desolate nightingale mourning her vacant nest, every feature of which Thomson has used in a most exquisite bit of description, longer than the original, and more tender and beautiful, and made especially effective by the musical quality of the verses:—

(G., IV. 511–515).[1]

"Qualis populea maerens Philomela sub umbra
amissos queritur fetus, quos durus arator
observans nido implumes detraxit; at illa
flet noctem ramoque sedens miserabile carmen
integrat et maestis late loca questibus implet."

(Spring, 817–828).

"Oft when returning with her loaded bill,
The astonished mother finds a vacant nest,

---

[1] As the nightingale mourning in the poplar shade laments her lost young, that the heardhealed ploughman, beholding, has taken unfledged from the nest; but she weeps the night through, and sitting on a bough, renews again and again her unhappy song and fills all the country round with the sound of her woe.

By the hard hand of unrelenting clowns
Robbed, to the ground the rural provision falls;
Her pinions ruffle, and, low-dropping, scarce
Can bear the mourner to the poplar shade;
Where, all abandoned to despair, she sings
Her sorrows through the night; and on the bough
Sole-sitting, still at every dying fall
Takes up again her lamentable strain
Of winding woe; till wide around, the woods
Sigh to her song and with her wail resound."

Unusual love.

Each poet deals at length with the subject of unusual love, Thomson, as usual with a more extended application and greater attention to detail. He takes three examples from the "Georgics" and adheres so closely to the original that they may be regarded as free translations:—

(G., III. 212–236).[1]

"Atque ideo Tauros procul atque in sola relegant
pascua post montem oppositum et trans flumina lata
aut intus clausos satura ad praesepia servent.
carpit enim vires paulatim uritque videndo
femina, nec nemorum patitur meminisse nec herbae

---

[1] And for this reason they send the bulls far away into lonely pastures behind an opposing mountain, and beyond wide rivers, or keep them shut up within their homes at their well-filled stalls. For the female preys little by little upon their strength and

dulcibus illa quidem inlecebris, et saepe superbos
cornibus inter se subigit decernere amantes.
pascitur in magna Sila formosa juvenca:
illi alternantes multa vi proelia miscent
vulneribus crebris; lavit ater corpora sanguis,
versaque in obnixos urguentur cornua vasto
cum gemitu; reboant silvaeque et longus Olympus.
nec mos bellantes una stabulare, sed alter
victus abit longeque ignotis exsulat oris,
multa gemens ignominiam plagasque superbi
victoris, tum, quos amisit inultus, amores;
et stabula aspectans regnis excessit avitis.

---

consumes it when they see her, nor, indeed,
with her pleasant charms does she suffer
them to think of woods or sweet grass, and
often she impels her haughty loves to strive
with one another with their horns. There is
the lovely heifer grazing in the great forest
of Sila: they engage in violent battle, now
one now the other, with frequent wounds;
dark blood bathes their forms, and with loud
bellowing they urge opposing horns against
the struggling enemy; the woods reecho,
and the heavens sound afar. Nor are the
warring rivals wont to dwell together in
the stable, but the conquered one goes far
away and lies in exile in unknown
regions, groaning much over his disgrace
and the wounds of the haughty victor, then

ergo omni cura vires exercet et inde
duras jacet pernox instrato saxa cubili,
frondibus hirsutis et carice pastus acuta,
et temptat sese, atque irasci in cornua discit
arboris obnixus truncoque lacessit ictibus, et sparsa ad pugnam proludit harena
post ubi collectum robur viresque refectae,
signa movet, praecepsque oblitum fertur in hostem"
(Spring 1789-805).

"While thus the gentle tenants of the shade
Indulge their inner loves, the rougher world
Of brutes, below, rush furious into flame
And fierce desire. Through all his lusty veins

---

over the love he has lost unavenged; and with one last look upon his stall he has left his ancestral kingdom. Then he exercises his powers with every care, and among hard rocks he lies the night-long on his unstrewn bed, and feeds on prickly leaves and sharp reed grass; and he tries himself and learns to throw his horns in anger striving with the trunk of a tree; and he challenges the wind with blows and sends the sand flying in prelude for the battle. Then, when his strength is renewed, and his powers regained, he advances his standards, and is borne headlong upon the heedless foe.

The bull deep scorched, the raging passion fells.
Of pasture sick, and negligent of food,
Scarce seen he wades among the yellow broom,
While o'er his ample sides the rambling sprays
Luxuriant shoot; or through the mazy wood
Dejected wanders nor the enticing bud
Crops, though it presses on his careless sense.
And oft in jealous maddening fancy wraft,
He seeks the fight, and idly-butting, feigns
His rival gored in every knotty trunk.
Him should he meet the bellowing war begins:
Their eyes flash fury; to the hollowed earth
Whence the sand flies, they mutter bloody deeds,
And groaning deep the impetuous battle mix;
While the fair heifer, balmy-breathing, near
Stands kindling up their rage."

(G. III 266 – 279).[1]

"Scilicet ante omnes furor est insignis equarum,
et mentem Venus ipsa dedit quo tempore Glauci
Potniades malis membra absumpsere quadrigae.
illas ducit amor trans Gargara transque sonantem
Ascanium; superant montes et flumina tranant,
continuoque avidis ubi subdita flamma medullis
vere magis, quia vere calor redit ossibus – illae
ore omnes versae in Zephyrum stant rupibus [altis],
exceptantque leves auras et saepe sine ullis
coniugiis vento gravidae – mirabile dictu –
saxa per et scopulos et depressas convalles

---

[1] "It is plain that the madness of mares is

diffugiunt, non, Eure, tuos neque solis adortus
[Auster,
in Boream Caurumque, aut inde nigerrimus
nascitur et pluvio contristat frigore caelum".
(Spring 808-828).

"The trembling steed
With this hot impulse seized in every nerve,
Nor hears the rein nor heeds the sounding thong;
Blows are not felt; but, tossing high his head,
And by the well-known joy to distant plains
Attracted strong, all wild he bursts away;
O'er rocks and woods and craggy mountains flies;
And neighing, on the aerial summit takes
The exciting gale; then steep-descending, cleaves

---

greatest of all; it was Venus herself that made them so at the time when the chariot steeds of Glaucus wickedly tore his limbs to pieces. Love leads them over Gargara and sounding Ascanius. They speed over mountains, and swim across rivers, and straightway, when the flame has penetrated deeply within - more in the spring than at any other time — all turned towards the west wind stand on lofty cliffs and take the light breeze, then ....., strange to tell - they flee down over rocks and crags and level valleys, not to the east or southeast but into the north and northwest, or whence the gloomy southwind rises and saddens the sky with its chilling rain.

The headlong torrents foaming down the hills,
Even where the madness of the straitened stream
Turns in black eddies round; such is the force
With which his frantic heart and sinews swell."

Virgil's vision of Leander perishing in the Hellespont is just as vividly drawn by Thomson, with the omission of the one feature of the wailing sorrow of the parents; this gives Virgil's description greater pathos, but the rest of the images of the two pictures are the same, and they are expressed with equal energy:—

(G. III. 258-263).[1]

"Quid juvenis, magnum cui versat in ossibus ignem
durus amor? nempe abruptis turbata procellis
nocte natat caeca serus freta; quem super ingens
porta tonat caeli et scopulis inlisa reclamant
aequora; nec miseri possunt revocare parentes
nec moritura super crudeli funere virgo."

(Spring. 1064-1073).

"Through forests huge, and long untrammelled heaths,

---

[1] What of the youth in whose soul burns the fire of love? Late at night he swims the dark seas troubled with dangerous storms. Above him thunders the great gate of heaven, and dashing waves shout back from the sea cliffs. Nor can his unhappy parents call him back nor the maiden who too will die because of his cruel death.

With desolation brown, he wanders waste,
In night and tempest wrapt, or shrinks aghast
Back from the bending precipice; or wades
The turbid stream below and strives to reach
The farther shore, where, succorless and sad,
She, with extended arms his aid implores,
But strives in vain: borne by the outrageous flood
To distance down, he rides the ridgy wave,
Or whelmed beneath the boiling eddy sinks."

Summer. In "Summer" there are no very close imitations of specific passages in the "Georgics". The likeness that is to be chiefly observed is found in the occurrence of similar invocations, and in the choice of analogous subjects, as the plague, the praises of the poet's native land, and the discussion of philosophy. These features have already been indicated, and they will not be treated here. Several lines, however, have been selected that seem to present a slight resemblance.

Flocks in early morning. The shepherd driving his flocks to the fields in the early summer morning while the dew is on the grass furnishes a likeness in thought rather than language. Thomson's description contains one thought of rare and delicate beauty: the shepherd drives his flock "to taste the verdure of the morn"

but the passage in Virgil is exquisite throughout, and is more complete and more vivacious:—

(G. III. 322—326).[1]

"At vero Zephyrus cum laeta vocantibus aestas
in saltus utrumque gregem atque in pascua [mittet;
Luciferi primo cum sidere frigida rura
carpamus, dum mane novum, dum gramina canent,
et ros in tenera pecori gratissimus herba".

(Summer 68—66).

"Roused by the cock the soon-clad shepherd [leaves
His mossy cottage, where with peace he dwells;
And from the crowded fold, in order, drives
His flock to taste the verdure of the morn."

Lines 868—869 in the "First Georgic,"

Floating chaff and leaves. describing floating chaff and leaves, and imitated very closely in "Virgil" are suggested in "Summer" 1658—1660:—

"Wide o'er the thistly lawn, as swells the breeze,
A whitening shower of vegetable down
Quivering floats."

Portents of Evil. In keeping with the prevailing

---

[1] But when joyous summer with summoning Zephyrus sends both the flocks into the woods and pastures, let us go forth into the cool fields with the first star of the dawn, while morning is new, and the grass is white, and the dew on the tender herbs is most pleasing to the flocks.

ut silicis venis abstrusum exuderet ignem:
tum alnos primum fluvii sensere cavatas;

. . . . . .

atque alius latum funda iam verberat amnem
alta petens, pelagoque alius trahit umida lina:
tum ferri rigor atque argutae lamina serrae
nam primi cuneis scindebant fissile lignum
tum variae venere artes. labor omnia vicit
improbus, et duris urgens in rebus egestas".
(Georgics, 92-129)

"Grade of time! till Industry approached,
And roused him from his miserable sloth;
His faculties unfolded; pointed out
Where lurish Nature, the directing hand
Of Art demanded; showed him how to raise
His feeble force by mechanic powers,
To dig the mineral from the vaulted earth,

---

for the grain stalk in the furrow and strike out hidden fire from veins of flint. Then first rivers felt the boat of hollowed alder:

. . . . . .

and now one is dashing the broad river with his casting net, and seeking its depths, and another drags his dripping meshes in the sea: then came stubborn iron, and the blade of the shrill-sounding saw — for men first cut the fissile wood with wedges — then came various arts. Hard labor conquered all things, and necessity that urges in adversity.

On what to turn the piercing rage of fire
On what the torrent and the gathered blast;
Gave the tall ancient forest to his axe;
Taught him to cleave the wood and hew the stone,
Till by degrees the finished fabric rose;

. . . . . .

The boat light skimming stretched its oars [wings].

The storm on the harvest field is closely imitated in almost every feature:— (G., I 318–327).†

storm on the harvest fields

"Omnia vento-rum concuere proelia vidi,
quae gravidem late segetem ab radicibus imis
sublimem expulsam eruerunt ita turbine nigro
ferret hiemps culmumque leve stipulasque [volantes]
saepe etiam immensum coelo venit agmen aqua-rum
et foedam glomerant tempestatem imbibus atris
collectae ex alto nubes; ruit arduus aether,

---

† Oft have I seen all the winds rush to battle and tear up the heavy crop far and wide from its very roots and whirl it in air, just as a winter storm with its black hurricane would bear away light stalks and flying stubble. Often there comes from the heavens a vast column of water, and clouds collected on high mingle the foul tempest with dismal rains; down falls the high dome of the sky, and washes away the smiling crops and the labors of the oxen with a deluge of rain; the ditches

et pluvia ingenti sata laeta boumque labores
diluit; implentur fossae et cava flumina crescunt
cum sonitu fervetque fretis spirantibus aequor."

(Autumn 311-343).

"Defeating oft the labours of the year
The sultry south collects a potent blast.
. . . . . .
But as the aerial tempest fuller swells,
And in one mighty stream, invisible,
Immense the whole excited atmosphere
Impetuous rushes o'er the sounding world,
. . . . . .
Exposed and naked to its utmost rage
Through all the sea of harvest rolling round,
The billowy plain floats wide; nor can evade,
Though pliant to the blast its seizing force;
Or whirled in air, or into vacant chaff
Shook waste. And sometimes, too, a burst of rain,
Swept from the black horizon, broad descends
In one continuous flood. Still overhead
The mingling tempest weaves its gloom, and still
The deluge deepens; till the fields around
Lie sunk and flatted in the sordid wave.
Sudden the ditches swell, the meadows swim,
Red from the hills, innumerable streams
Tumultuous roar; and high above the banks

---

are filled and the hollow streams swell
with a roaring sound and the sea boils
in every foaming inlet.

The river left; before whose rushing tide
Herds, flocks, and harvests, cottages, & swains
Roll mingled down: all that the winds had
In one wild moment ruined; the big hopes,
And well earned treasures of the painful year."

In these descriptions the topics are arranged in very nearly the same order — the wind rises, the growing grain is torn up and whirled in air, a sudden rain follows, with ever increasing cloud and storm, the ditches fill and streams suddenly rise, and the wild deluge sweeps away everything in its path. This fact, together with the closeness of resemblance in every detail, gives a suspicion of translation, and this suspicion is strengthened by the line, "Or whirled in air, or into vacant chaff Shook waste", which appears to be a translation of the simile of the winter storm whirling light stalks and stubble, as this is understood by some of the commentators on this passage to be a part of the summer storm.

Chase, wines, & springs.

In "Autumn" there occurs a description of the chase,[1] an enumeration of different kinds of wines,[2] and a discourse on the springs that are the sources of all earth's

[1] Autumn, 359-501. [2] Autumn, 680-706. [3] Autumn, 773-825.

streams). These present only a slight resemblance to Virgil's chase,[1] and his discussion of wines[2] and wine sources,[3] although there is sufficient to persuade to the belief that their reason for being is to be found in the fact that Virgil treated of those topics. In the chase Thomson pities the hunted hare and stag, and, as if desirous of mentioning all the animals Virgil named, directs the huntsman to spear lions, set the dogs on the wolves, and with the dart to "pierce the wild boar" growling horrid. Then, having disposed of the chase according to Virgil's idea of it, he explains that these animals are not found in Britain, and concludes with a vivid description of the true English fox hunt. There seems to be no good reason why wolves beset by a pack of hounds, and growling boars should be named at all unless the poet had his model in mind. In the treatment of wines, as England is not a wine growing country it was necessary to pass in fancy to foreign countries where the vine flourished, and, giving a brief description of the vineyard, the subject closes with an

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[1] G., III. 404 - 413. [2] G., II. 89 - 108. [3] G., II 365 - 378.

enumeration of French and Spanish wines. The great rivers of earth rising in Cyrene's valley abode furnished a suggestion for a long, semi-scientific treatise on "the vast eternal springs," and "the rivers in their infant beds," which contains many very effective phrases.

Charms of rural life

The description of the charms of rural life in "Autumn" 220 - 1878, is largely a translation of the last part of the "Second Georgic," 458 — 542. There are few topics dealt with in either that are not found in the other, and they are arranged in nearly the same order. Thomson introduces the subject with the farmer's festivities when the harvesting is completed, and closes with the invocation to Nature that she may teach him wisdom; while Virgil closes with the farmer's observance of festal days, and, early in the discussion, introduces the appeal to the Muses for knowledge. This part of the work has already been treated on page 17 and will not be given here. The other topics will be presented in the order in which they occur in Autumn. The dependence of thought in the two passages is very nearly the same although the order of parts differs somewhat; and the

likeness in thought and language is strongest in those parts that occur in the same order. The holiday festivities of each show the customs of their own time and place, hence there is considerable diversity in the two descriptions (G., II. 527–531).[1]

"Ipse dies agitat festos fususque per herbam
ignis ubi in medio et socii cratera coronant,
te, libans, Lenaee, vocat, pecorisque magistris
velocis jaculi certamina ponit in ulmo,
corporaque agresti nudant praedura palaestrae"
(Autumn, 1221–1228).

"While loose to festive joy, the country round
Laughs with the loud sincerity of mirth;
Shook to the wind their cares. The toil-strung youth,
By the quick sense of music taught alone.

. . . . . .

The cudgel rattles, and the wrestler twines.
Age, too, shines out; and garrulous recounts
The feats of youth. This they rejoice, nor think
That, with to-morrow's sun, their annual toil
Begins again the never-ceasing round."

---

[1] The farmer himself stretched upon the grass observes the festal days, when with a fire in the midst and a merry company of friends wreathing the bowl, he calls upon thee, Lenaeus, offering a libation, and sets a mark in the elm tree for spearing matches among the herdsmen, and the comely youths strip their bodies hardened for the wrestle.

(G., II 458–460).[1]

"O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
agricolas, quibus ipsa procul discordibus armis
fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus"

(Autumn, 1285–1288).

"Oh! knew he but his happiness, of men
The happiest he; who far from public rage
Deep in the vale, with a choice few retired,
Drinks the pure pleasures of the rural life."

(G., II. 461–462.)[2]

"Si non ingentem foribus domus alta superbis
mane salutantum totis vomit aedibus undam."

(Autumn 1239–1241).

"What though the dome be wanting whose proud gate
Each morning vomits out the sneaking crowd
Of flatterers false, and in their turn abused?"

(G., II. 463–466.)[3]

"Nec varios inhiant pulchra testudine postes,
illusasque auro vestis Ephyreiaque aera,

---

[1] O, most happy are the farmers, if but they knew their blessedness, for whom far from discordant arms most righteous earth pours forth plentiful sustenance from the soil.

[2] If the lofty palace does not each morning disgorge from its proud gates a vast throng of flattering clients.

[3] And if they do not gaze upon door posts inlaid with splendid tortoise shell, and robes embroidered with gold, and

alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana veneno,
nec casia liquidi corrumpitur usus olivi;"
(Autumn, 1242-1257).

"Vile intercourse! What though the glittering Robe
Of every hue reflected light can give,
Or floating loose, or stiff with massy gold,
The pride and gage of fools! offuss him not?
What though from utmost land and sea purveyed
For him each rarer tributary life
Bleeds not, and his insatiate table heaps
With luxury and death! What though his bowl
Flames not with costly juice; nor sunk in beds,
Oft of gay care, he toates out the night
Or melts the thoughtless hours in idle state?"
(G., II. 467-472) [1]

"At secura quies et nescia fallere vita,
dives opum variarum, at latis otia fundis
speluncae, vivique lacus, et frigida Tempe,
mugitusque boum, mollesque sub arbore somni

Corinthian bronzes, and if their white wool is not dyed with Assyrian drugs and the use of the clear olive oil is not corrupted with cassia;

[1] But they have quiet peace and a life in which pretense is unknown, riches of various kinds, and ease amid the prospect of broad domains, grottoes and natural lakes, and cool Tempe, nor is the lowing of oxen wanting, and

non absunt; illic saltus ac lustra ferarum,
et patiens operum exiguoque adsueta juventus,

(Autumn, 1257-1275).

"Sure peace is his; a solid life estranged
To disappointment and fallacious hope:
Rich in content in Nature's bounty rich,
In herbs and fruits; whatever greens the Spring,
When heaven descends in showers; or bends the bough,
When Summer reddens and when Autumn beams,
Or in the wintry glebe whatever lies
Concealed, and ripens with the richest sap:
These are not wanting; nor the milky drove,
Luxuriant, spread o'er all the lowing vale;
Nor bleating mountains; nor the chide of streams,
And hum of bees, inviting sleep sincere
Into the guiltless breast, beneath the shade,
Or thrown at large amid the fragrant hay;
Nor aught besides of prospect, grove or song,
Dim grottoes, gleaming lakes, and fountains clear.
Here, too, dwells simple truth, plain innocence,
Unsullied beauty, sound unbroken youth,
Patient of labour with a little pleased."

(G., II. 503-505). [1]

"Solicitant alii remis freta caeca, ruuntque

---

sweet sleep beneath the trees. Here are forest glades, and haunts of wild beasts, and youth patient of labour, and accustomed to little.

1 Others are seeking the gloomy seas with oars,

ni ferrum penetrant aulas et limina regum;
hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque Penates,"
(Autumn, 1278-1283).

"Let others brave the flood in quest of gain,
And heat for joyless months the gloomy wave.
Let such as deem it glory to destroy,
Rush into blood, the sack of cities seek;
Unpierced, expulsing in the widow's wail,
The virgin's shriek and infant's trembling cry.
(G., II. 510-512). 1

. . . "Laudent perfusi sanguine fratrum
exilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant
atque alio patriam quaerunt sub sole jacentem"
(Autumn, 1284-1286.

"Let some far distant from their native soil,
Urged on by want or hardened avarice,
Find other lands beneath another sun."
(G., II. 498-502). 2

"Fortunatus et ille, deos qui novit agrestes,
Panaque Silvanumque senem Nymphasque sorores.

---

and rushing upon the sword, or pressing into halls and portals of kings. One brings ruin upon a city and its wretched homes.

1 Some exult in bathing themselves in a brother's blood, and exchange home and dear fireside for exile, and seek a land lying beneath another sun.

2 And happy is he who knows the rural gods, Pan the aged Silvanus and the sister nymphs.

illum non populi fasces, non purpura regum
flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres
aut conjurato descendens Dacus ab Histro,
non res Romanae perituraque regna: neque ille
lenti
aut doluit miserans inopem aut invidit habenae
quae rami fructus, quos ipsa volentia rura
sponte tulere sua, carpsit, nec ferrea jura
insanumque forum aut populi tabularia vidit"
(Autumn 1791 - 1810).

. . . . . "Let these
Ensnare the wretched in the toils of law,
Fomenting discord and perplexing right,
An ion race! and those of fairer front,
But equal inhumanity in courts,
Delusive pomp, and dark cabals, delight;
Wreathe the deep bow, diffuse the lying smile,
And tread the weary labyrinth of state,
While he from all the stormy passions free

Him the honors of the people do not move, nor the purple of kings, and discord embroiling brothers in strife, or the sworn Dacian ally descending from the Danube, nor the Roman state and falling kingdoms. He never felt the pangs of pity for the poor nor envy of the rich. What fruits the branches bear, what the cheerful country of its own free will brings forth, these he gathers, nor sees the injustice of the iron laws, nor the mad strife of the forum, nor the archives of the people.

That restless men involve, hears, and but hears,
At distance safe, the human tempest roar,
Wrapped in close conscious peace. The fall of kings
The rage of nations, and the crush of states,
More not the man, who from the world escaped,
In still retreats and flowery solitudes,
To Nature's voice attends from month to month,
And day to day through the revolving year;
Admiring sees her in every shape;
Feels all her sweet emotions at his heart;
Takes what she liberal gives, nor thinks of more".

(G., II. 486-489) [1]

. . . . . "O ubi campi
Spercheosque et virginibus bacchata Lacaenis
Taÿgeta o qui me gelidis convallibus Haemi
sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra?"

(Autumn, 1316-1319).

"In Summer he beneath the living shade,
Such as o'er Tempe' nont to wave,
Or Haemus cool, reads what the muse, of these
Perhaps, has in immortal numbers sung."

(G., II. 323-324). [2]

"Interea dulces pendant circum oscula nati,

---

[1] O for the plains of Spercheos, and Taÿgeta traversed over with their revels by Spartan maidens, O for one to set me down in the cool valesi of Haemus and shelter me beneath the vast shade of its boughs.

[2] Meantime his sweet children are hanging

casta pudicitiam servat domus,"

(Autumn, 1337-1344).

"The touch of kindred too and love he feels;
The modest eye, whose beams on his alone
Ecstatic shine; the little strong embrace
Of prattling children, twined around his neck,
And emulous to please him, calling forth
The fond parental soul."

(G. II 523-540). 1

"Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini,
hanc Remus et frater, sic fortis Etruria crevit
scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma,
septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces.
ante etiam sceptrum Dictaei regis et ante
impia quam caesis gens epulata juvencis,

---

on his lips and his chaste house preserves its modesty

1 This life the ancient Sabines cherished in former times, and Remus and his brother. Thus in truth Etruria grew strong, and Rome was made the fairest city on the earth, and surrounded her seven hills with a single wall. Yea even before the rule of the Cretan king, and before an impious race began to regale itself on slain bullocks, Saturn, ruler of the Golden Age, led this life on earth. Nor did men yet dare to blow the martial trumpet nor to hammer out the sword on the stubborn anvil.

aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat;
necdum etiam audierant inflari classica necdum
infositos duris crepitare incudibus enses."

(Autumn, 1348-1357).

"This is the life which those who fret in guilt,
And guilty cities, never knew; the life,
Led by primeval ages uncorrupt,
When angels dwelt, and God himself, with man!"

Winter

"Winter" shows less of the influence of Virgil than "Spring" or "Autumn," but more than "Summer." Yet there are some passages that are without doubt conscious imitations. The similar subjects are fewer in number, however, and usually short, there being only two that are sustained for any considerable length. The poems were published in the order of "Winter," "Summer," "Spring," and "Autumn", and Thomson in the first two did not commit himself so unreservedly to deliberate imitation as in the last two, though the same general features of resemblance are found in all, and in "Autumn," 67-155, in giving the portents of wind and rain, not only are many of the same signs given that are given in the "Georgics", I, 357-392, but they are expressed in similar language and in nearly the same order.

portents of wind & rain

The confused sound from the mountains and the roar of the sea are given first by Virgil. Thomson mentions the sound at the beginning of his account of the signs of storm, and describes it more fully at the close:-

(G. I. 366-359).[1]

"Continuo ventis surgentibus aut freta ponti
incipiunt agitata tumescere et aridus altis
montibus audiri fragor, aut resonantia longe
litora misceri et nemorum increbrescere murmur."

(Winter, 68-71).

"And up among the loose disjointed cliffs,
And fractured mountains wild the bawling brook
And cave presageful, send a hollow moan,
Resounding long in listening fancy's ear."

(Winter, 149-152).

. . . . . "While from the shore,
Afar into caverns by the restless wave,
And forest rustling mountain comes a voice,
That solemn sounding bids the world prepare".

(G. 376).[2]

"Aut arguta lacus circumvolitarit hirundo."

---

[1] At once when the wind is rising the troubled inlets of the sea begin to swell, and a dry crashing sound is heard from the lofty mountains, or the shores, resounding afar, mingle their roar and increase the murmur of the forests.

[2] Or the twittering swallow flutters round the pool.

(Winter, 80 – 88.)

". . . . . "The wanderers of heaven,
Each to his ~~his~~ home, retire; save those that love
To take their pastime in the troubled air,
Or skimming flutter round the dimply pool."

(G., I. 450 – 456).[1]

"Hoc etiam, emenso cum iam decedit Olympo
profuerit meminisse magis; nam saepe videI. 438
ipsius in vultu varios errare colores:
caeruleus pluviam denuntiat, igneus Eurus;
sin maculae incipient rutilo immiscerier igni,
omnia tum pariter vento nimbisque videbis
fervere."

(Winter, 118 – 121).

"When from the pallid sky the sun descends,
With many a spot, that o'er his gloomy orb
Uncertain wanders stained; red fiery streaks
Begin to flush around."

(G., I. 427 – 429).[2]

"Luna, revertentes cum primum colligit ignes,

---

[1] This too it will aid you more to remember when he has finished his course and is descending from the sky; for often we see various colors wandering over his face; a dusky hue announces rain, a fiery red east wind: but if the dark spots begin to be mingled with ruddy fire, then you see the whole universe rage with wind and rain clouds.

[2] If the moon when first she collects her

Si nigrum) obscuro comprendit aëra, cornu,
maximus agricolis pelagoque parabitur imber.
(Winter, 123–126).

. . . . . "While rising slow,
Blank in the leaden colored east, the moon
Wears a wan circle round her blunted horns."
(G. I 365–367).[1]

"Saepe etiam stellas vento impendente videbis
praecipites caelo labi, noctisque per umbram
flammarum longos a tergo albescere tractus;"
(Winter, 126–129).

"Seen through the turbid fluctuating air,
The stars obtuse emit a shivering ray;
Or frequent seem to shoot athwart the gloom,
And long behind them trail the whitening blaze."
(G. I. 368–369)[2]

"Saepe levem spalea et frondes volitare cadueas,
aut summa nantes in aqua colludere plumas."

---

returning fires, includes dark atmosphere
within her dim horns there will be brewing
a terrible storm for the farmers and for the sea.
1 Often too when wind is near you will
see stars shooting headlong from the sky
and through the gloom of night whitening
long trains of flame behind.
2 And often you will see light chaff
and fallen leaves flitting about and
feathers dancing on the water's surface.

(Winter, 130-131).

"Snatched in short eddies plays the withered leaf;
And on the flood the dancing feather floats".

(G., 373, 376).[1]

. . . . . "Aut bucula caelum
suspiciens patulis captavit naribus auras,"

(Winter, 132-133).

"With broadened nostrils to the sky upturned,
The conscious heifer snuffs the stormy gale."

(G., 390-392).[2]

"Ne nocturna quidem carpentes pensa puellae
nescirent hiemem, testa cum ardente viderent
scintillare oleum et putris concrescere fungo".

(Winter, 134-137).

"Even as the matron, at her nightly task,
With pensive labour draws the flaxen thread,
The wasted taper and the crackling flame
Foretell the blast."

(G., 381-382).[3]

. . "Et pastu decedens agmine magno
corvorum increpuit densis exercitus alis."

---

[1] Or the heifer, looking skyward, with ilo broad nostrils snuffs the stormy gale.

[2] And the maidens, drawing the threads at their nightly tasks, can foretell the storm when they see the oil sputter in the glowing lamp, and crumbling soot form round the wicks.

[3] And returning in a great line from their ~~feeding~~ pasture an army of rooks clamors loudly on serried wings.

(Winter, 189-142).

"Retiring from the downs, where all day long
They picked their scanty fare a blackening train
Of clamorous rooks thick-urge their weary flight
And seek the closing shelter of the grove."

Kindness to flocks

Pity for the weak and suffering is felt by both poets; it is felt for toiling suffering man, and is very often manifested towards the creatures that serve man. This gentle sentiment pervades the "Seasons" and imparts a tone of sadness. It appears here and there in the "Georgics" and gives a pathetic quality that adds much interest to the didactic poem. In both it is wholly spontaneous and natural. The pity felt for the bleating flocks in winter is so exceedingly natural that it can scarcely be regarded as an imitation, although there is considerable similarity:-

(G., III. 318-321).[1]

"Ergo omni studio glaciem ventosque nivales
quo minor est illis curae mortalis egestas,
avertes victumque ferres et virgea laetus
pabula nec tota claudes faenilia bruma."

---

[1] Therefore shelter them with all zeal from ice and snowy winds, the less need they have of the care of man, and cheerfully

(Winter 265-268)

"Now, shepherds, to your helpless charge be kind;
Baffle the raging year and fill their pens
With food at will; lodge them below the storm,
And watch them strict."

Northern winters

In the description of northern winters occur several closely analogous passages which utilize about half of all that Virgil says about Scythia. The picture of the hunted deer floundering helplessly in the new-fallen snow is repeated in all its details; the sudden freezing of rivers is not so closely imitated, and the convivial cave dwellers of the "Georgics", are, in the "Seasons," a dull unjoyous race, who know not the "sprightly jest nor song." In no other of his imitations has Thomson been so felicitous as in the description of the action of the frost. Virgil's statement that "Sudden crusts form on the running stream" is the plainest of prose in comparison with the exquisitely poetical conception of Thomson:—

(G., III. 360)[1]

"Concrescunt subitae currenti in flumina crustae."

---

bring them food and fodder of bushwood, nor shut the hay loft the winter through.

1. Sudden crusts form on the running streams.

(Winter, 728-745.)

"An icy gale, oft shifting, o'er the pool
Breathes a blue film, and in its mid career
Arrests the bickering stream."

(G, III. 367-375) [1]

"Interea toto non setius aëre ninguit:
intereunt pecudes, stant circumfusa pruinis
corpora magna boum, confertoque agmine cervi
torpent mole nova et summis vix cornibus exstant
hos non immissis canibus, non cassibus ullis
Puniceae agitant pavidos formidine pinnae,
sed frustra oppositum trudentes pectore montem
comminus obtruncant ferro, graviterque ruentes
caedunt, et magno laeti clamore reportant."

(Winter, 816-826)

"There mann together pressed the drooping deer

---

[1] Meantime it snows none the less from all the sky; the cattle perish; great forms of open stand covered over with hoar-frost; the deer in a crowded troop grow torpid under the weight of the new-fallen snow, and scarce lift the tips of their horns above it. The hunter has no need of dogs or snares, or of terrifying with the dread of the crimson feather; but as they push their breasts against the mountain heap in vain, near at hand (the hunters) cut them down with the sword, and slay them bellowing piteously. Then joyfully bear them home with a shout of triumph.

Sleep on the new-fallen snows; and scarce his head
Raised o'er the heapy wreath, the branching elk
Lies slumbering sullen in the white abyss.
The ruthless hunter wants nor dogs nor toils,
Nor with the dread of sounding bows he drives
The fearful flying race; with ponderous clubs
As weak against the mountain heaps they push
Their beating breasts in vain, and piteous, bray,
He slays them grieving on the ensanguined snows
And with loud shouts rejoicing bears them home."

(G, III: 376-383). 1

"Ipsi in defossis specubus secura sub alta
otia agunt terra congestaque robora totasque
advolvere focis ulmos ignique dedere.
hic noctem ludo ducunt, et pocula laeti
fermento atque acidis imitantur vitea sorbis.
talis Hyperboreo septem subjecta trioni
gens effrena virum Rhipaeo tunditur Euro
et pecudum fulvis velatur corpora saetis."

---

1 They pass the time in careless leisure in caves they have dug deep under the earth. They roll stores of oak and whole elms up to the fireside and give them to the flames. Here they spend the night in sport, and joyously imitate the wine cup with barm and sour service berries. Such an embittled race of men exposed to the seven Hyperborean stars are ever buffetted by the east winds of Rhipeo, and their bodies are clothed with the rough tawny skins of beasts.

(Winter, 941-946).

"Deep from the piercing season sunk in cares
Here by dull fires, and with unjoyous cheer
They waste the tedious gloom: immersed in furs,
Doze the gross race. Nor sprightly jest, nor song,
Nor tenderness they know: nor aught of life,
Beyond the kindred bears that stalk without."

Amount of borrowed material.

In this comparison of the two works we are forced to see that the greater part of the material received from the "Georgics" was not recalled at random, but was deliberately adapted from the original with the text at hand. Of the twenty-one hundred eighty eight verses in the "Georgics", two hundred twenty six, or more than one tenth of the entire poem, have been quoted as furnishing Thomson with images and words; perhaps another tenth have been referred to as furnishing analogous subjects and not quoted in full, so that the English poet utilized at least one fifth of the substance of the "Georgics", and he often employed it with such minuteness as to incur the suspicion of deliberate translation.

Other influences

Traces of the Eclogues and the Aeneid are to be discerned occasionally, and also of other authors than Virgil, especially Milton, whose influence is

strongest in "Winter". And there are some passages that are reminders of Dryden and Pope. It has already been said that Thomson was unable to free himself from the trammels of his age. The conventionalisms of the society of his day obtrude themselves continually, and unmistakably stamp the poem with the time of its composition. The ornate forms of expression that were affected by the classical school are indulged in with the utmost freedom, and the modes of thought that prevailed in society and the schools of this time are frequently manifest.

Thomson's originality

But, notwithstanding these numerous influences to be discerned in the "Seasons", when the whole work is considered with unbiased judgment its originality is at once apparent. If viewed with partial judgment, after studying his indebtedness to Virgil, Thomson appears as an unscrupulous plagiarist; and, if the conventionalisms of his age be sought he seems to be much fettered by them. But, apart from all these considerations, the most cursory reading of the "Seasons" reveals a spirit that is wholly

new in the interpretation of Nature;
a sympathetic treatment of the
varying phenomena of nature as the
seasons change; and a reverent mind
that beholds God in every blossom
cloud, and birdsong, and that seeks
to attune the soul of man into
fullest harmony with all the forms
of nature, and their beneficent
Creator. The qualities of truth and
seriousness, which Matthew Arnold
emphasises as the essential characters
of true poetry, are the dominating
qualities of the poem, and it is in
those portions of the work that are
freest from foreign influence that
Thomson gives his most truthful
descriptions and manifests the most
ingenuous seriousness. It is in
them that his real genius has
fullest scope. The most effective
descriptions and most charming
felicities of diction are not generally
found in the imitations, although
in some of them, as in the descent
of spring rains, the lament of the
nightingale and the sudden freezing
of streams, Thomson has far surpassed
his model in delicacy and charm of
expression. But what is most beautiful,

and most worthy in the "Seasons" is to be sought in those parts where his unhammelled genius expresses itself. It is in the animating spirit of the poem, and in the distinctive character of his diction that Thomson is original. Others had written about nature but none had loved her so well in all her moods, and felt the virifying influence of constant communion with her. It was because Thomson had a true insight into nature that he was able to describe her every phase with such wonderful distinctness and truth. He is singularly fortunate too in the adaptation of words to ideas, and many of his most effective images are accomplished by the use of a happy word or phrase which gives distinction to the whole picture. To the one who reads the "Seasons" for the first time there comes a series of surprises in the large number of felicitous expressions that he seems always to have known, and the discovery of their origin affords keen pleasure. Few poets have been quoted so freely without being named. Many of the gems of the "Seasons" have become commonplaces in literature.

The singular charm of Thomson's style is sustained throughout the poem, even in those portions that are close imitations of the "Georgics"; and upon every part he has left the impress of his own peculiar genius.

Rank and judgment of critics.

He is not a mere plagiarist but a true poet, the first to revolt from the false standards of his time, and the harbinger of a new era in poetry. Nor was he surpassed by any of the later poets of sentiment and nature who followed in his footsteps. Standing midway between two schools of wholly opposite tendencies he manifests some of the faults of both, but is honored as introducing a new method into poetry, and as giving to the natural world a prominent place among the subjects of poetry. Perhaps it is because of this place and this distinction that the critics differ so radically in their estimates of him. For the poem has glaring faults at the same time that it has excellencies. One will dwell upon the blemishes until his vision has become obscured to all its virtues. Another is so fully charmed with the many truly noble and exalted qualities of the poem that he

is ready even to defend the faults that are reprehensible. When first published the poems were enthusiastically received by the English people, and their author was sincerely loved. When his influence began to be felt in the literary world at large France and Germany gave him their tribute of praise. The nineteenth century witnessed a decline of favor, and in the restless, hurrying world of today the readers of the long and often monotonous poem of the "Seasons" are comparatively few, though Thomson's best critic is a modern one. His life and works have recently been very exhaustively treated by Leon Morel, a French writer of rare discernment and sound judgment. Though not blind to the defects of the poet, he accords him high rank among the masters of literature as one who "gave the signal and the watchword of a revolution destined to renovate the literature of Europe." Why he disregarded the poet's indebtedness to Virgil in a work otherwise so complete is difficult to understand, unless he felt that Thomson in the adaptation of borrowed material had been so true to his own poetic nature that he was

absolved from all blame; even then because of the very marked influence of Virgil upon him, a chapter on the subject might have been expected in so extensive a work. That others in a brief criticism should dismiss the subject with a contemptuous word is not surprising. But after a somewhat careful comparison of the two poems I am not ready to regard Thomson's imitations of Virgil with disrespect. It is a question whether it would be an improvement to the "Seasons" if all traces of Virgil were removed, and it would be scarcely just to say that Thomson did not make a legitimate use of his model. He surely has borrowed no more than Virgil himself, or most of the other masters in literature, and just as they have given distinction to others' material, he has endued all that he borrowed from Virgil, in the way of suggestion or substance, with the grace of his own peculiar genius. Thomson is not Virgil or Spenser any more than Virgil is Homer, Hesiod, or Theocritus. And although, when the attention is directed upon upon the thoughts and language that are

such close imitations, we are prompted to call him a plagiarist, as soon as we have attained a just apprehension of the scope, the spirit, and the underlying harmony of the whole work, and have felt the charm of his descriptions we are ready to accord the author of the "Seasons" a high place in literature, not, indeed, with the masters, for there are too many really serious faults to admit of that, but high rank among the poets of the second class, and the first place among the descriptive poets of nature.